

Guide to Career Path Development Plans

NASA Langley Research Center



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For more information about the Career Development Program go to the LaRC CPPT website:

<http://ohcm.larc.nasa.gov/CPPT/index.html>

PREFACE

Career Progression Paths Team

The Career Progression Paths Team was chartered in December 2005 to establish guidance for employee career development and progression through grade levels. The team was lead by Dr. Ajay Kumar, Director of Langley's Systems Analysis and Concepts Directorate and Leah Meisel, Director of Langley's Office of Human Capital Management. Team membership included subject matter experts (SMEs) representing various occupational series, representatives from many of the Mission Directorates, and representatives from Mission Support Offices including the Office of Chief Counsel, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, Center Communications Director, and the Office of Human Capital Management. Consultants from the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) with expertise in employee development were also key contributors. Specifically, the team had the following objectives:

1. Develop and document the Langley Research Center's official career progression process and promotions for all employees.
2. Document available career paths and enrichment opportunities at the Center. Define associated grade levels and criteria for different grade levels.
3. Develop an approach for workforce planning to effectively meet Agency and Center goals.
4. Compensate employees commensurate with assigned responsibilities.

In gathering data, four NASA Centers were benchmarked on promotion processes and position management policies. Johnson Space Center's Guide to Career Development was used as a template for the Career Path Development Plans developed by the team. The team identified five occupational families:

- Administrative/Clerical
- Engineer/Scientist/Supervisor
- Mission Support
- Program/Project Management
- Technician

Sub-teams of subject matter experts were selected within each of the five occupational families and worked with OPM consultants to develop career paths, grade level criterion, and enrichment activities for each. This information is contained in the Career Path Development Plans.

Taking the First Step

Taking the first step is often the hardest part of getting started in career development. This initial step will be different for each individual depending upon career goals and his or her current position. Supervisors and the Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) will assist employees by providing information and advice about career options and development opportunities. Employees should contact representatives in the OHCM for help with individual needs or questions. To find the appropriate representative, go to the following website:
<http://ohcm.larc.nasa.gov>

INTRODUCTION

Career development is an ongoing process in which employees should remain active, continually working toward their goals. To make the most of career opportunities, employees must take primary responsibility for planning and monitoring their own careers. This begins with a self-assessment of values, competencies and interests. Using this information, individuals define their career goals and, together with their supervisors, develop realistic plans for reaching these career goals.

Supervisors play a critical role in this process by actively supporting and contributing to employee career progression efforts. Perhaps the most important element of this role is that of coach and counselor. Supervisors should advise employees regarding strengths and areas for improvement to assist them in the self-assessment process and in the development of their Individual Development Plans. Additionally, supervisors can help their employees by encouraging them to pursue appropriate training and development experiences and providing information about career options.

The Center supports supervisors and employees by providing an atmosphere that stimulates personal and professional growth. This includes fostering a climate that promotes mobility and development opportunities, providing training experiences that aid employees in identifying career goals and encouraging the pursuit of these goals. In addition, the Center establishes ongoing systems and processes that balance employee career goals and organizational needs, thus ensuring that LaRC has the continuity of talent and appropriate skill mix needed to accomplish its mission.

Career progression will be different for each person, and no process guarantees reassignments, training opportunities, or promotions. What a career development program cannot do is provide a checklist that, when completed, will result in additional responsibilities or advancement. What it can and is designed to do is provide employees with information, the environment and tools they need to develop their capabilities. By doing so, both the employee and the Center benefit.

NASA Langley Research Center SMEs, in collaboration with OPM consultants, developed customized Career Path Development Plans for LaRC employees and supervisors to enhance career development at NASA Langley Research Center. Two supplemental guides entitled, “Guide to Career Path Development Plans” and “Guide to Understanding Human Capital” were also created for employees and supervisors to promote a more comprehensive understanding of the career development processes and policies at LaRC.

1. **“Guide to Career Path Development Plans”** provides an overview of the career development process. Specifically, it is a step-by-step guide that details how to utilize the Career Path Development Plans. Also included are a detailed description of various methods of career development, employee and supervisor responsibilities in the career development process, and the steps to preparing an Individual Development Plan (IDP).
2. **“Career Path Development Plans”** identify typical career path progression, grade level criteria, and enrichment activities for five occupational families: Administrative/Clerical, Engineer/Scientist/Supervisor, Mission Support, Program/Project Management, and Technician.
3. **“Guide to Understanding Human Capital”** provides information pertaining to “Building an Organization.” Specifically, information on the Merit Principles, position management, the Personnel Classification System, and guiding principles for staffing and promotion is included.

The Guide to Career Development Plans, Career Path Development Plans, and Guide to Understanding Human Capital are NOT:

- a requirement, though they provide valuable information for employees who want to further their careers and for supervisors to assist their staff in this process; or
- a promotion process; instead they are career progression guides that will provide employees with information about the types of skills and enrichment activities needed to further their career goals.

Utilization of the Career Path Development Plans does no create job openings or guarantee promotions or reassignments. The plans and two guides can, however, help you develop both personally and professionally, while enhancing your ability to contribute to LaRC's future.

Why Should You Use The Career Path Development Plans?

- Are you interested in *self development*?
- Are you interested in receiving training to *improve a certain competency or competencies*?
- Are you interested in moving into *another career path*?
- Are you interested in becoming a *manager or leader*?
- Are you interested in making yourself more *marketable in the future*?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then the Career Path Development Plans and accompanying guides are for you — and for your supervisor.

OVERVIEW OF THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

A Career Development Program is a system of long-term training and development that fits the work being done to meet the mission of the organization; creates a well-rounded workforce where all individuals can develop a broader set of competencies; and promotes self initiative. Career development is a proven methodology. Organizations invest in career development because they understand the benefit for employees and the organization. LaRC senior management agrees — career development makes sense. The career path development plans and the supplemental guides are NASA Langley Research Center's first step in implementing a comprehensive career development program.

The Career Development Program objectives are:

- a knowledge-based workforce;
- continual development and learning;
- business growth;
- improved leader pipeline;
- increased employee satisfaction and morale;

- improved customer satisfaction;
- increased number of employees qualified to fill higher-graded positions;
- increased competencies of the functional/technical employees; and
- additional time for managers and supervisors to focus on real operational issues due to increased employee effectiveness.

Enhancing our professionalism through career development promotes current and future productivity and quality, increases accountability in individuals for their own development, and makes LaRC a more cohesive organization. Partnerships will grow between supervisors and employees, among employees, and across work units as developmental assignments are implemented LaRC-wide.

Through career planning and participating in enrichment activities, you can:

- become an expert in your current job;
- expand your responsibilities and enrich your job;
- broaden your responsibilities through a job change;
- advance to a higher level; and
- prepare yourself for a new career.

CAREER PATH DEVELOPMENT PLANS

A Career Development Program is based on general and technical competencies and includes career paths, grade level criterion, and enrichment activities as identified in the Career Development Plans for each family of occupations. A Career Path Development Plan is specific to an occupational group, and provides a reference for the competencies required for success in a specific occupation and serves as a tool for employees to manage their careers. The purpose of the Career Path Development Plans are to provide all employees with a standard roadmap, from entry through executive levels, for enhancing their personal and professional growth, and to assist LaRC in developing a highly competent and professional work force. More specifically, the Career Path Development Plans' objectives are to:

- identify typical *career paths, grade level criteria, and enrichment activities* for Administrative/Clerical, Program/Project Management, Technician, Mission Support and Engineer/Scientist/Supervisor occupational families;
- provide employees and their supervisors with a *single source reference* to assist in determining appropriate training and to prepare employees for more senior-level positions;
- assist supervisors in making *effective use of scarce training resources* by identifying critical competencies and training courses so employees can attend the appropriate courses at the appropriate time; and
- enable employees to *plan and sequence appropriate career training and development*.

LaRC's philosophy of career progression emphasizes flexibility and multiple approaches to meeting individual and organizational needs. The Center does not dictate a highly-structured process or one best approach, but instead recognizes the need for individual choice and initiative. While the Center's approach to career development is not prescriptive in nature, there are some fundamental principles that are useful to understand. At LaRC, career progression is viewed as a process of personal and professional growth composed of two major elements:

1. **Career Planning** - Individuals identify opportunities, make choices, set goals based on self-assessment and devise action plans to attain those goals.
2. **Career Management** - The Center establishes systems and processes that develop individual talent; balance employee career goals with organizational needs; provide employees with career counseling, training and development; and ensure that LaRC has the appropriate skill mix needed to accomplish its mission.

What is Included in a Career Development Plan?

- Typical Career Paths with Job Titles and Grade Levels
- Grade Level Criterion
- Enrichment Activities

HOW TO USE THE CAREER PATH DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Career Path

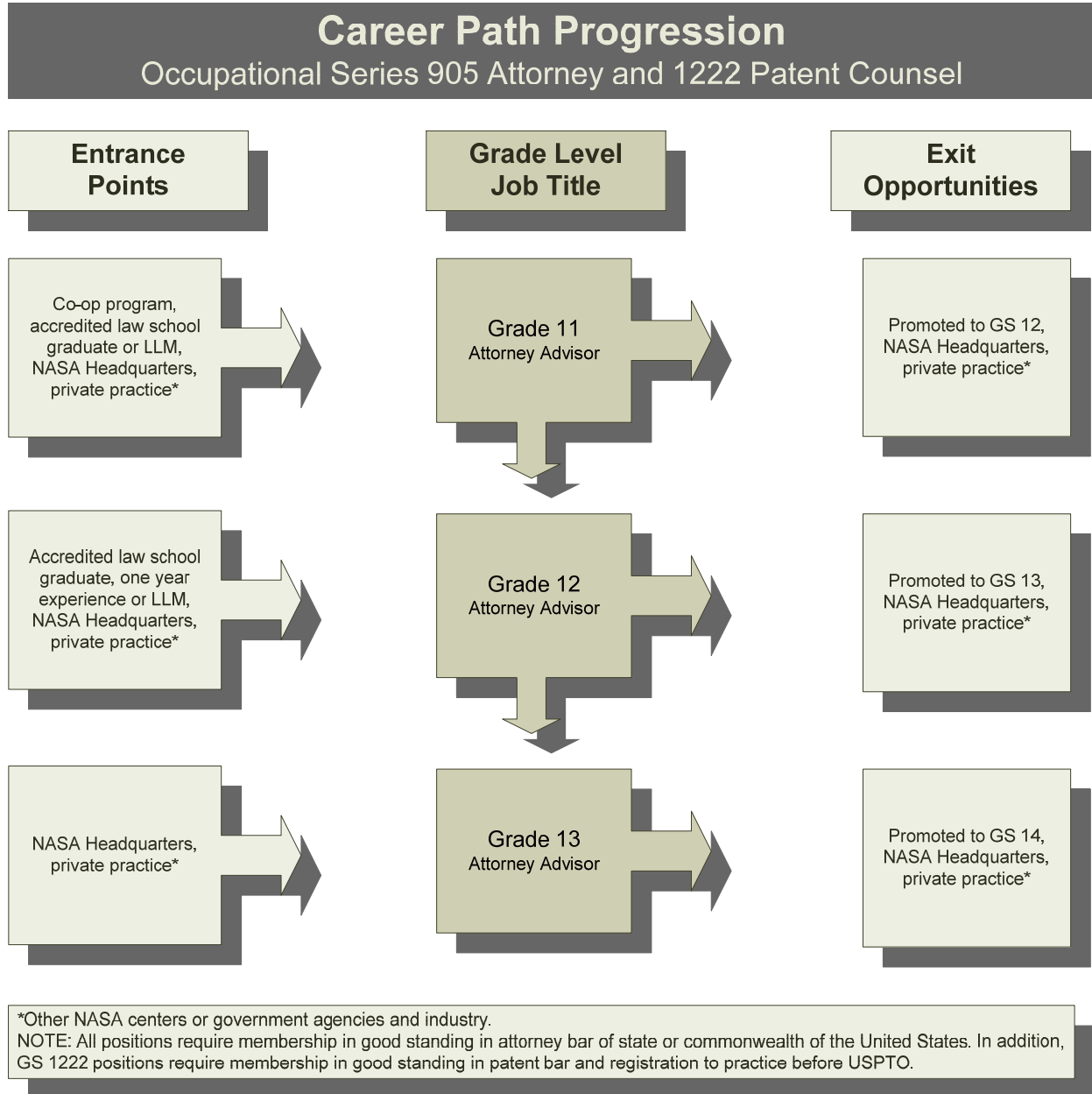
A career path is a progression of positions in one or more occupational series. As illustrated in the samples (Occupational Series 905 Attorney and 1222 Patent Counsel; Occupational Series 800 Engineer) below, each career path is comprised of entrance points, grade level and job title(s), and exit opportunities. Entrance points are located on the left side of the career path diagram and include each identified grade level within the occupational series. Common entrance points include academia, other occupational series, other NASA centers and government agencies, and industry. For example, attorneys entering LaRC at the GS 11 level typically come from a co-op program, accredited law school, NASA Headquarters, or private practice. Engineers entering LaRC at the GS 7 level typically enter from mission support, technician, or clerical/secretarial (with qualifying degree) series, academia, co-op program, intern program, other NASA centers or government agencies and industry.

Grade levels and associated job titles are found in the center of the diagram and range from entry-level to the highest achievable position for the occupational series. Common job titles are associated with each grade level; however, the list of job titles presented is not exhaustive. For example, Attorney Advisor is a common title for attorneys at the GS 11, 12, and 13 levels. For the engineer series, specific job titles were not identified due to the large number of jobs included in this particular occupational series.

Exit opportunities are located on the right side of the diagram, and represent opportunities for employees to assume new roles, either within or outside of LaRC. Common exit opportunities include moving into another occupational series, moving into a lateral position, advancing to a higher grade level, or transferring to another center or government agency. For example, attorneys at the GS 11 level may be promoted to the GS 12 level, obtain a position at NASA Headquarters, move into private practice, or transfer to another NASA Center or government agency and industry. Engineers at the GS 7 level may seek other opportunities such as promotion to the GS 9 level positions at other NASA centers or government agencies and

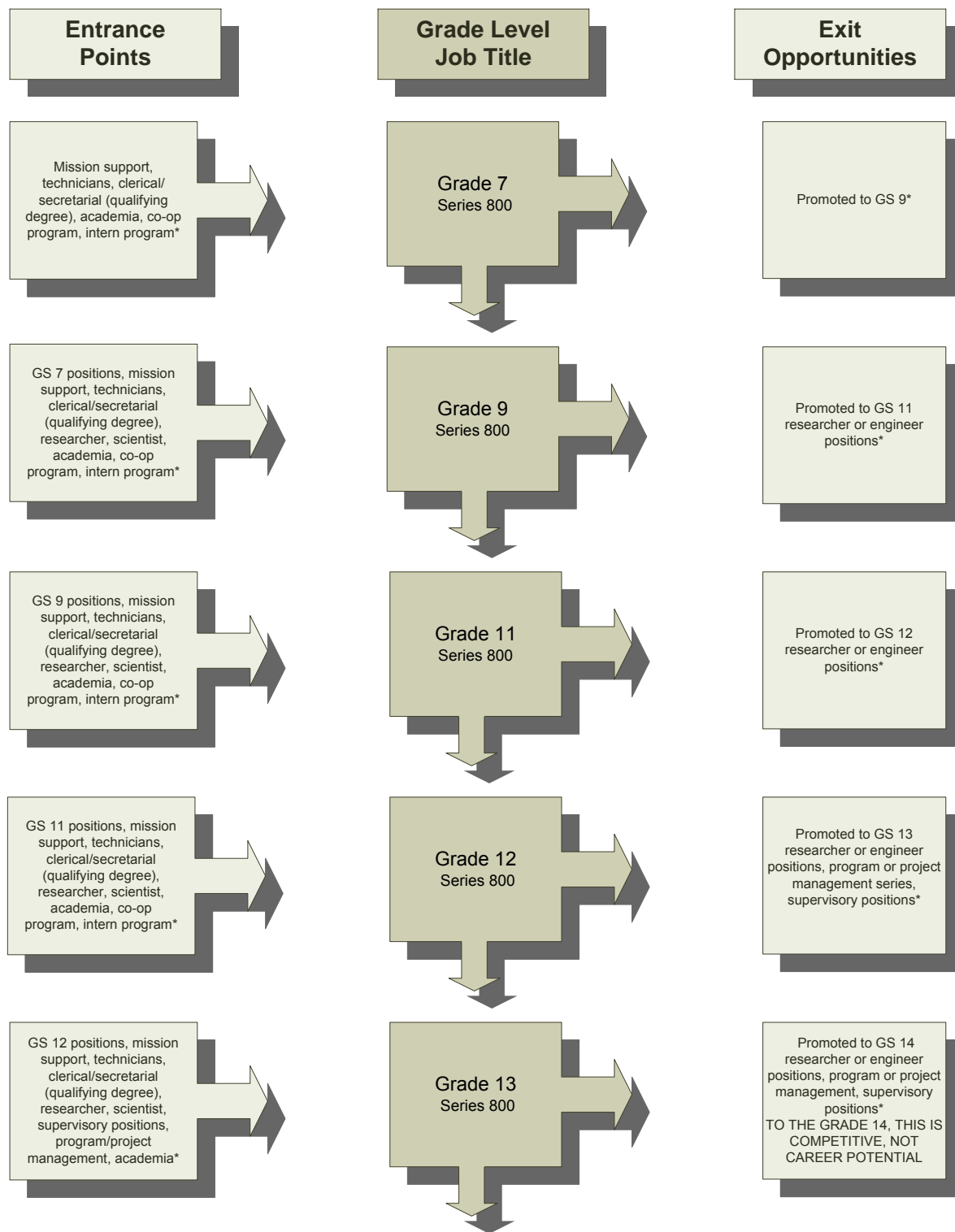
industry. In addition, both attorneys and engineers interested in other occupational series may review opportunities for a variety of occupations across LaRC.

Employees can utilize the career path diagram to identify their current occupational series. In addition, employees can view other occupational series. For example, an attorney can review the career path for the 905 series as well as review career paths for another occupational series that he/she is interested in pursuing.



Career Path Progression

Occupational Series 800 Engineer



*Other NASA centers or government agencies and industry

Criterion

Criteria describe the job duties and tasks required for effective job performance at each grade level. The criterion consists of two components: grade level and competency. The brief criterion samples (Occupational Series 905 Attorney and 1222 Patent Counsel; Occupational Series 800 Engineer) below list the competencies linked to grade level required for employees in the sample occupational series.

Employees can utilize the criterion to identify:

- overall competencies for the occupational series;
 - For example, the competencies identified for employees in the attorney occupational series are technical knowledge, legal advice and counsel, and legal research; the competencies identified for employees in the engineer occupational series include self-management, teamwork and leadership, and communication. Employees can look across grade levels to see the differences in tasks linked to changes in grade level.
- current grade level to review tasks linked to competencies;
 - For example, employees in the attorney series at the GS 11, 12, or 13 and engineers at the GS 7-11 and 12-13 level can review the required tasks linked with competencies associated with their own grade levels in these occupational series.
- projected grade level to compare current tasks to those of higher grade levels; and
 - For example, employees in the attorney occupational series at the GS 11 can review the tasks at the GS 12 and higher levels to determine differences between their current grade level criterion and higher grade level criterion. For employees in the engineer occupational series at the GS 11 level and GS 12 level the criterion is the same. In this particular case, the subject matter experts did not identify the criterion at these two levels as being distinctly different.
- grade level criterion in a different occupational series.
 - For example, employees in the attorney occupational series who are interested in the patent counsel occupational series can review the targeted competencies and tasks associated with each grade level in the patent counsel series.

The information contained in the criterion can be used to determine training and development needs. For example, an employee in the engineer occupational series can utilize the criterion to determine if he or she needs to further develop communication skills to perform the tasks listed in the criterion for communication. If an employee determines a need to enhance these skills, he or she can review the enrichment activities listed under the communication competency for possible developmental opportunities.

Criterion Occupational Series 905 Attorney			
Competency	GS 11	GS 12	GS 13
Technical Knowledge	With Senior Attorney and supervisor direction and approval, applies knowledge of the fundamentals of law (e.g., contract law, personnel law, ethics and fiscal law) to assist attorneys and Center clients with resolving basic and routine legal issues.	With Senior Attorney oversight, applies knowledge of a variety of legal subject matters (e.g., procurement, personnel law, ethics, fiscal, FOIA, privacy, claims, and agreements) to assist clients and senior attorneys with resolving difficult, non-precedent setting legal questions by providing legal opinions and through conducting aspects of trial preparation.	With minimal Senior Attorney oversight, applies advanced knowledge of a variety of legal subject matters (e.g., procurement, personnel, ethics, fiscal, FOIA, privacy, claims, and agreements) to resolve difficult legal issues that establish precedents binding on the Center; Center personnel and organizational directors rely on knowledge applied in independently conducting meetings with clients, by providing legal guidance and opinions, and by conducting trials and hearings.
Legal Advice & Counsel	Serves as legal advisor on issues involving application of fundamentals of law, with guidance and approval of Senior Attorney Advisors.	Serves as legal advisor on multidisciplinary questions and issues, with approval of Senior Attorney Advisors.	Serves as legal advisor on complex multidisciplinary questions and issues, with minimal oversight of Senior Attorney Advisors.
Legal Research	Conducts assigned legal research related to the application of statutes, rules, and regulations, hearings, and legislative issues.	Conducts independent legal research addressing multiple issues related to the application of statutes, rules and regulations, hearings, and legislative issues.	Conducts independent legal research and analysis addressing issues covering multiple areas of law and related to complex legal or factual issues with broad or binding legal impact and high level liability exposure for the Center.

Criterion Occupational Series 800 Engineer		
Competency	GS 7-11	GS 12-13
Self-Management	Completes tasks as assigned by supervisor or technical lead/mentor.	Works independently on broadly defined problems assigned by supervisor/team lead and proposes solutions (including resource requirements).
Teamwork and Leadership	Serves as an effective branch or directorate team member by contributing technical knowledge.	Assists or leads Center or project level teams by formulating resource requirements, technical approach, and task plans.
Communication	Presents ideas and solutions at Branch level.	Communicates at project/organizational unit level through publications, presentations, and technical reports.

Enrichment Activities

Enrichment activities are training and development opportunities that employees can utilize to develop their skills in specific competency areas. For example, employees in the attorney occupational series can determine training and development opportunities in knowledge of

litigation, communication, and agency practices; employees in the engineer series can seek training and development activities in continual learning, leadership/teambuilding, organizational knowledge, and communication. In addition, employees can view the various opportunities available at each grade level. Employees can also view the enrichment activities in another occupational series to determine training and development opportunities according to grade level and competency area.

Enrichment Activities			
Occupational Series 905 Attorney and 1222 Patent Counsel			
	Knowledge of Litigation	Communication	Agency Practices
Grade 11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-the-job training in specified performance areas - Mentoring from colleagues and Senior Attorneys - Supervised projects & assignments - Beginning Training Seminars - Legal Conferences - Rotational assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verbal and Written Communication courses - Art of Persuasion courses - Negotiations courses - Mediation courses - On-the-job training - Teambuilding training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-the-job training - Advisor on Special Agency Projects - Advisor to Agency Team - Agency specific courses (e.g., MAST, MIP, MAP) - Attend Agency Information Symposia
Grade 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-the-job training in specified performance areas - Mentoring from colleagues and Senior Attorneys - Supervised projects & assignments - Beginning Training Seminars - Legal Conferences - Rotational assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verbal and Written Communication courses - Art of Persuasion courses - Negotiations courses - Mediation courses - On-the-job training - Teambuilding training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-the-job training - Advisor on Special Agency Projects - Advisor to Agency Team - Agency specific courses (e.g., MAST, MIP, MAP) - Attend Agency Information Symposia

Enrichment Activities				
Occupational Series 800 Engineer, 800/1300 Researcher-Physical Scientist, and Supervisor				
	Continual Learning	Leadership/Teambuilding	Organizational Knowledge	Communication
Grade 7-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional Entrance Training Program, Center-funded training - Graduate Study Programs (e.g., GSRP) - Attend NIA lectures and workshops - Participate in technical colloquia, professional societies (e.g., AIAA, SPIE), conferences and symposia - Participate in APPEL discipline core courses, technical courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - APPEL courses (e.g., team leadership/membership) - Informal Seminars (e.g., Langley Brown Bag Seminars) - Professional societies (e.g., AIAA) - Seek a mentor - Seek involvement in community (e.g., presentations, fair judging) - NASA First Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Employee Orientation Program (tour, online, classroom) - Town Hall meetings - APPEL courses (Intro to Aerospace at NASA, Business Management) - Participate in center-wide projects or committees (e.g., CALIPSO) - Open-Door (meetings with Center Director monthly) - "Inside NASA" website - OPM and USDA financial courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical writing courses (e.g., APPE), write technical papers, publish technical reports - Toastmasters - Participate and/or present at conferences - Internal technical seminars - Language skills courses - Teach short courses in technical discipline areas
Grade 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional Entrance Training Program, Center-funded training - Graduate Study Programs (e.g., GSRP) - Attend NIA lectures and workshops - Participate in technical colloquia, professional societies (e.g., AIAA, SPIE), conferences and symposia - Participate in APPEL discipline core courses, technical courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - APPEL/public speaking/leadership courses and programs (e.g. team leadership/membership, OPM courses, teambuilding program) - Informal Seminars (e.g., Langley Brown Bag Seminars) - Professional societies (e.g., AIAA) - Serve as a mentor - Seek involvement in community (e.g., presentations, fair judging) - NASA First Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Employee Orientation Program (tour, online, classroom) - Town Hall meetings - APPEL courses (Intro to Aerospace at NASA, Business Management) - Participate in center-wide projects or committees (e.g., CALIPSO) - Open-Door (meetings with Center Director monthly) - "Inside NASA" website - OPM and USDA financial courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical writing courses (e.g., APPE), write technical papers, publish technical reports - Toastmasters - Participate and/or present at conferences - Internal technical seminars - Language skills courses - Teach short courses in technical discipline areas
Grade 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional Entrance Training Program, Center-funded training - Graduate Study Programs (e.g., GSRP) - Attend NIA lectures and workshops - Participate in technical colloquia, professional societies (e.g., AIAA, SPIE), conferences and symposia - Participate in APPEL discipline core courses, technical courses - Floyd Thompson, NASA Administrator, or other fellowship programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - APPEL/public speaking/leadership courses and programs (e.g. team leadership/membership, OPM courses, teambuilding program) - Informal Seminars (e.g., Langley Brown Bag Seminars) - Professional societies (e.g., AIAA) - Serve as a mentor - Seek involvement in community (e.g., presentations, fair judging) - Agency LMDP courses (e.g., MIP, LDP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Employee Orientation Program (tour, online, classroom) - Town Hall meetings - APPEL courses (Intro to Aerospace at NASA, Business Management) - Participate in center-wide projects or committees (e.g., CALIPSO) - Open-Door (meetings with Center Director monthly) - "Inside NASA" website - OPM and USDA financial courses - Details to other NASA Centers or Headquarters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical writing courses (e.g., APPE), write technical papers, publish technical reports - Toastmasters - Participate and/or present at conferences, internal technical seminars - Language skills courses - Teach short courses in technical discipline areas - Review and publish papers, journals, proposals, and books - OPM Media Interaction training

CAREER DEVELOPMENT ROLES

It is the responsibility of both employees and managers/supervisors at LaRC to ensure that career development is achieved. For career development to be effective, everyone must take responsibility and play a role. Following are brief descriptions of the responsibilities involved in career development.

Employee:

- Performs self-assessment
- Learns about LaRC opportunities
- Defines career goals and identifies relevant training and development
- Discusses goals with supervisor
- Prepares Individual Development Plan
- Understands the Career Development Program

- Understands the results of the needs assessment performed for his/her organizational and functional/occupational levels

Manager/Supervisor:

- Defines organizational-level goals for training and development
- Learns employee goals
- Encourages and establishes appropriate timing for employee training and development
- Follows up with employees after training and development opportunities
- Coaches/counsels employees
- Provides feedback on employee progress
- Determines the need for positions based upon the goals and objectives outlined in the Center strategic and business plan,
- Determines the duties and responsibilities of positions and developing position descriptions with assistance from the Human Resources Office
- Ensures that employees either have, or are provided with, opportunities to obtain required competencies

The first-line supervisor is in the best position to observe work behavior, understand and evaluate employee performance and identify when the employee is ready to assume greater responsibility, and is most knowledgeable about tasks that need to be completed.

LaRC:

- Provides strategic vision/direction
- Provides organizational development support
- Offers individual development tools and programs
- Analyzes training needs
- Fosters an environment for career growth
- Encourages training and development opportunities

Human Resources:

Human Resources administers a variety of career services to benefit all LaRC employees, including providing training options and coaching managers and supervisors on how to use the Career Development Plans effectively.

Here are just a few specific examples of how the Career Development Program can benefit you...

If you are in this grade...	You can...
Grades 4-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve your skills to help prepare you for advancement or movement into another career path
Grade 8-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve your skills to help prepare you for advancement or movement into another career path• Learn about supervising others, working on a team, and project management
Grade 12-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve your skills to help prepare you for advancement or movement into another career path• Develop managerial and leadership skills
Grade 14-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance managerial and leadership skills• Prepare for an executive position• Learn how to improve the performance of your teams, unit, and individual employees

CAREER OPTIONS

A number of career options are available at LaRC. The combination of individual career preferences and organizational opportunities shape the direction of the employee's career. Too often, individuals focus solely on advancement to the next grade level. This limited view of career development ignores other viable options such as lateral movement, exploration of other areas of interest and career enrichment.

Lateral movement may provide the challenges and experiences that come with a new role while offering an opportunity to broaden knowledge and skills in new functional areas. This type of move does not involve a grade change, but it can provide the breadth of experience needed to pursue future career goals. Exploration of other areas of interest can include temporary rotations to other organizations and informational interviews with managers in other areas. These temporary changes may offer an employee a broader perspective and a breadth of knowledge in other areas.

Career enrichment provides another means for employees to enhance their abilities and augment their skill base. This typically involves increasing the skill variety, challenge or autonomy of the current position. This option allows employees to introduce change into their jobs and provides an avenue for growth without requiring movement to a different position. A limited view of career development emphasizes only promotion within a discrete field. A broader, more systemic view recognizes that enhancing current job responsibilities and moving in both lateral and upward directions all involve growth and development.

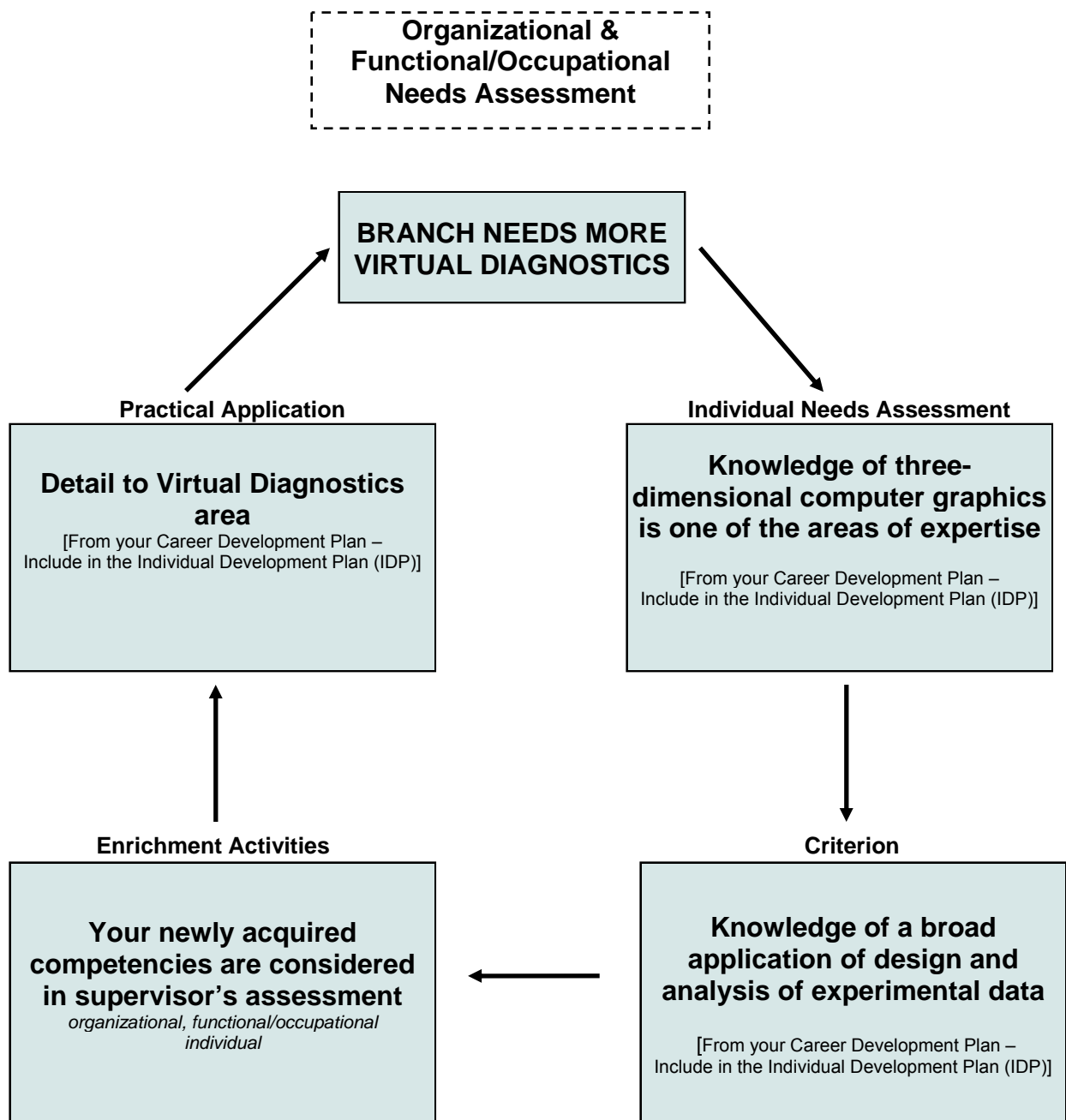
Resources

A variety of information resources and training opportunities are available to help employees make personal choices regarding career development at LaRC. Examples of these are listed below:

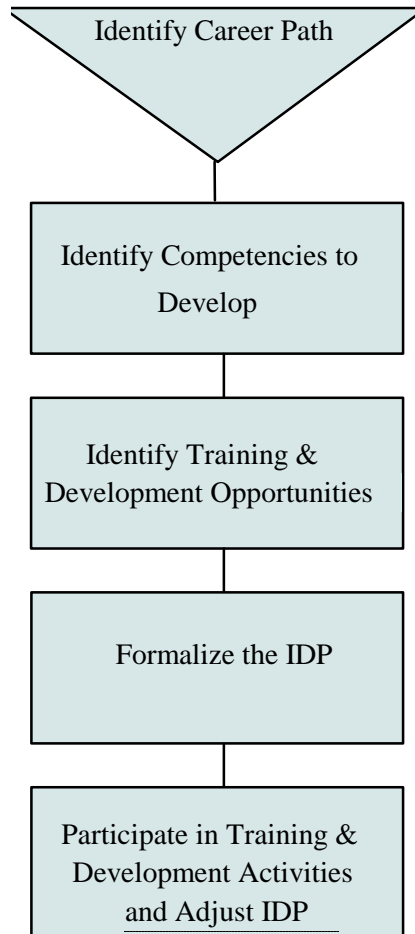
- **Training & Development Website:** <http://ohcm.larc.nasa.gov/training>
This is a great place to begin, as it lists and describes many training and development opportunities and resources.
- **Individual Development Plan:** <http://ohcm.gsfc.nasa.gov/DevGuide/IDPEmployee.LMS-CP-4312>
This is a tool for you, your supervisor, and an HR professional to map out your career path and assess your strengths and areas of improvement.
- **Job Announcements:** <http://atlarc.larc.nasa.gov/> OR <http://career.larc.nasa.gov>
A link to current Langley vacancy announcements is posted on the front page of @Larc (<http://atlarc.larc.nasa.gov/>). Vacancy announcements are also available on the Langley Career Page.

USING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN — AN EXAMPLE

The following is an example of how a competency or area of expertise is identified and developed. In this example, the organizational staffing plan has identified that the branch needs more expertise in Virtual Diagnostics due to emerging new lines of business for the Center. The Career Development Plan associated with the individual's current occupation shows that one applicable criterion is knowledge of three-dimensional computer graphics for instrumentation system design and analysis. The Career Development Plan recommends a rotational assignment or detail in the Virtual Diagnostics area. The employee agrees to a 120-day detail to work on a critical project developing instrumentation for analysis and display of exploration related experimental data. This is then documented on the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP). The employee successfully applies the newly acquired knowledge and skills to enhance another project once the detail is completed. This experience and accomplishment are considered during the employee's next appraisal and during the next staffing plan update.



STEPS TOWARD CAREER DEVELOPMENT – USING THE CAREER PATH DEVELOPMENT PLANS TO DRAFT THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)



STEP 1: IDENTIFYING CAREER PATHS

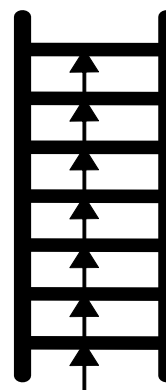
Before preparing your IDP, it is helpful to think long term. Where do you want to be in five years, ten years, fifteen years? What career path are you on now? Is it going to take you where you want to be? What other career options are available?

There are several options available in any career development program:

- Progress in a career ladder
- Pursue a career path
- Work in a dual track
- Explore career transition opportunities

What Is a Career Ladder?

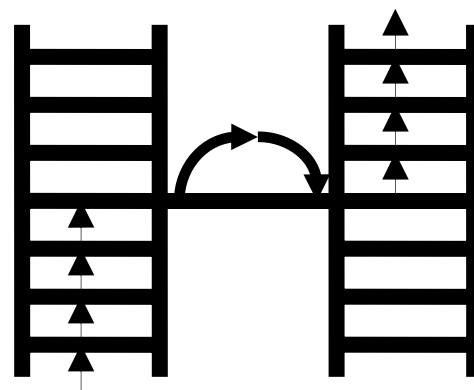
A career ladder is a progression of positions in an occupational series. Frequently, career ladder positions result from positions whose grades have been lowered for recruitment purposes. For example, there may be difficulty recruiting candidates at the full performance level.



Career ladders may also be implemented for training and employee development strategy reasons. The employee may advance from entry to intermediate to full performance level to senior/manager to executive levels. The employee becomes qualified for higher-level positions through a combination of resident training and/or independent study, increasingly more responsible experience, and on-the-job training. The promotion pattern in career ladder positions is normally 52 weeks between promotions, unless work requirements dictate a longer period (e.g., the need for an employee to experience the complete cycle of higher-level work).

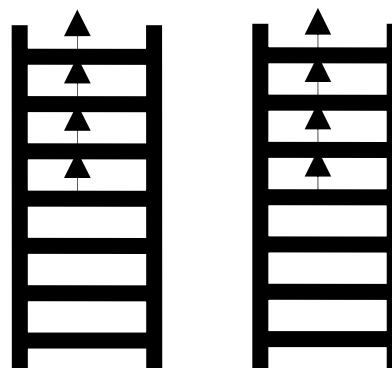
What Is a Career Path?

A career path is similar to a career ladder, except that more than one occupational series is involved. An employee may be in one occupational series, but take a “bridge” position, allowing the employee to move into a different, but related, occupational series. Movement in a career path can be either upward or lateral. Movement to a different, non-related, occupational series may require the employee to voluntarily take a lower grade to qualify for the position.



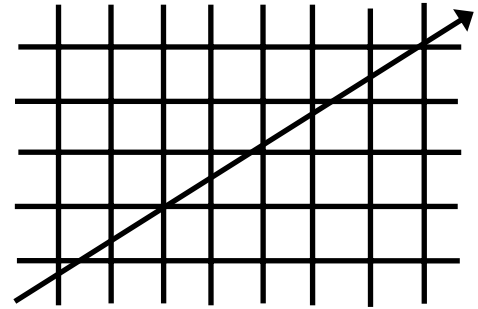
What Are Dual Tracks?

With dual tracks, an employee receives training for the current assignment as well as for a related but different job with its own training and experience requirements. Experience required for qualification in the secondary assignment may be attained by periodic details, cross training, or developmental assignments.



What Are Career Transitions?

Career transitions allow a great deal of flexibility for employees and supervisors. Employees easily move to positions that require similar competencies and are provided opportunities for training, growth, and variety.



The Career Development Plans provide you the information needed for the various options described above. Typical career paths for the various occupations are presented in the plans. The career paths include the most common possible tracks within LaRC. They also depict the occupations that typically feed into each of the occupations covered by the plan.

Career paths identify job progression opportunities and provide employees with assistance in pursuing their career goals. This section of the guide explains the primary career paths at LaRC. Studying these paths leads to a better understanding of available career options and results in more effective career planning

The paths cover several broad categories of occupations including Clerical/Administrative, Program/Project Management, Technician, Mission Support, and Engineer/Scientist/Supervisor. A sample of the skills and criteria that describe each grade are included, as well as appropriate enrichment (developmental) opportunities. These paths and accompanying descriptions are examples of alternatives and should be viewed as options available at the Center.

With the diversity of work at LaRC, a few occupations may fall outside the paths shown. For these occupations as well as the positions in the paths described, supervisors and human resources representatives can provide more specific information. Managers and employees can also refer to the OPM Classification Standards and Guides specifically related to these occupations.

STEP 2: IDENTIFYING COMPETENCIES TO DEVELOP

Each Career Development Plan includes the competencies linked to grade level criterion and related enrichment activities. You can look at the Career Development Plan to determine the competencies needed to progress in an occupational path.

Competencies

LaRC's Career Development Program is based on competencies identified as required for individual or a group of related occupational series. These competencies were identified by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from each of the various occupational series. Competencies are measurable patterns of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.

The Career Development Plans describe two types of competencies — general and technical. General competencies are required for effective performance across many occupations. Some competencies are cognitive (e.g., Reading or Reasoning) and others may reflect a mixture of cognitive and social skills (e.g., Teamwork or Interpersonal Skills). Technical competencies tend to be occupation-specific knowledge required for effective performance in one or a few particular occupations (e.g., Contract Management).

Needs Assessment and Responsibilities

Once you have identified the competencies you need to improve by utilizing the grade level criterion and enrichment activities for the relevant occupation, a discussion should occur between the you and your supervisor. For a valuable discussion to take place, a needs assessment should be conducted.

A needs assessment is the process of identifying 1) *performance requirements within an agency (i.e., grade level criterion), and 2) the "gap" between required and current performance*. A needs assessment explores the causes and reasons for the gap, methods for closing or eliminating the gap, and the consequences of ignoring the gap. A comprehensive, ongoing needs assessment offers many benefits. Focusing the needs assessment on the Agency's mission and critical occupational and performance requirements will help:

- employees and managers identify performance requirements that can be satisfied best by training and other developmental strategies;
- focus training and education dollars where they are needed most; and
- eliminate redundant training efforts.

Needs assessments can be conducted at multiple levels — individual, functional/occupational, and organizational. Needs assessment can be conducted using various techniques, including group and individual interviews, surveys, and observation.

Individual Assessment — At the individual level, needs assessment *explores differences between required and current performance levels of individual employees*. If a gap exists, it explores the causes for the gap and suggests how employees can expand their sets of competencies by engaging in training and development opportunities such as those described in the enrichment activities section of each Career Development Path.

Functional/Occupational Assessment — Needs assessment of the functional/occupational groups *explores differences between required and current performance levels of key functional/occupational groups*.

Organizational Assessment — The organizational assessment *looks at broad performance issues and opportunities to make changes or improvements in the Agency, and explores differences between required and current performance levels*. Generally, the needs assessment process should start at the organizational level.

Needs assessment data are collected from multiple sources (e.g., Career Development Plans, performance appraisals, IDPs) and analyzed by the employee, the supervisor, and appropriate levels in the organization. The results help to accurately and completely define the performance gaps and identify possible causes. Solutions, including training and other developmental activities, are explored. The best training and development approaches for closing the performance gap are identified upon exploration of all available opportunities. For the needs assessment process to be successful, both supervisors and employees must play an active role.

STEP 3: IDENTIFYING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Organizations need to become “learning organizations,” which can only be done through investments in training and development, coupled with empowerment.

Overview of Career Development Methods

After determining the competencies to be developed, training and development activities can be selected. Described below are some general types of developmental activities, not specific to LaRC. Following the description of general types of activities are enrichment activities specific to LaRC. These are intended only as examples, not an exhaustive list of all available opportunities.

Formal classroom training — Formal classroom training is often the first type of training that comes to mind, although it is not the only way to enhance knowledge and skills. This type of training:

- includes courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences; and
- can be offered by LaRC, colleges and universities, and other organizations.

Developmental assignments — This includes assignments to new positions that provide the employee ways to learn new techniques or perform different types of work. Developmental assignments:

- provide management with the opportunity to cross-train employees in more than one competency, providing staffing flexibility;
- enhance employees' understanding of other LaRC functions, systems, operations, and relationships;
- provide employees with a way to enhance their competencies, making them more competitive for future career opportunities; and
- can be competitive or noncompetitive and vary according to length and organizational or geographic location.

Self-directed training/self development — A self development activity (sometimes called independent study) is an individual, voluntary effort initiated and conducted by the employee. It can be funded by LaRC or may need to be self-funded. In many cases, students may pursue fully accredited college level courses through independent study. This training may occur in a group setting, or at an individual pace, and can include:

- courses at local colleges and universities, computer-based instruction, and distance learning;
- courses offered by professional/civic organizations, public school continuing education departments, etc.;
- college correspondence courses; and
- reading professional journals and books.

Long-term training (LTT) — This refers to training and education opportunities to which an employee is assigned on a continuous basis (full-time or part-time) for more than 120 calendar days. Examples include the SES Career Development Program (SES CDP) and the Leadership Development Program (LDP). LTT:

- may occur in Government or non-Government facilities; and
- may include both formal training programs and planned developmental assignments.

Continuing professional education (CPE) — Generally, professional work requires knowledge that can only be acquired through an undergraduate or graduate program at an accredited academic institution. To remain current after graduation, professionals must continue his/her learning through CPE.

- It is usually the professional's responsibility to determine the specific CPE programs that meet their educational goals and objectives.
- Some CPE activities may be conducted on the employee's own time and personal expense. Other activities may be provided using LaRC or other Government resources, depending on how directly related the specific activity is to the employee's current assignment or career ladder and depending on funding.

On the job training (OJT) — OJT is the primary type of training and development an employee receives, but it is the least recognized. OJT is typically presented one-on-one at the work site. Examples of OJT include job swaps, rotations, and details. To be effective, OJT must:

- include well-planned sessions between the employee and a designated trainer; and
- be led by a trainer who knows the job, has the desire and ability to train and provide feedback, and is willing to set aside sufficient time to accomplish the training without interruption at the work site.

LaRC Programs and Courses

The programs and courses detailed below are just a few examples of enrichment activities available at LaRC. For additional information, please contact the Organizational Development and Workforce Relations Branch at 864-2585.

- Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP):
 - CTAP services are open to all Langley Research Center civil service employees except those in the NASA Engineering and Safety Center. CTAP provides general career assistance services for job opportunities in the local commuting area. Individual career counseling is also available as well as resume preparation assistance.
- Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SES CDP):
 - The NASA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SES CDP) offers individuals a structured approach to preparing for recurring openings in the SES. These experiences, normally to be completed over a period of 12-18 months, include formal courses and seminars, work assignments, and individual mentoring from current SES members.
- Leadership Development Program (LDP):
 - The NASA Leadership Development Program (LDP) is designed as a succession-planning tool to support NASA and the Centers in developing future Agency executives. Employees selected for the LDP will be individuals who the Center expects to take on greater responsibility within the next 12 to 18 months.

Greater responsibility may mean a job with expanded scope, a different assignment in a program or project, or may reflect a realignment of responsibilities within an organization. Competition for the program will be Agencywide and Enterprise panels will make final selections. The one-year program will include one 4-9 month developmental assignment outside of the Center, a collateral assignment of 3 to 6 months, bi-monthly meetings in Washington, involvement in an Agencywide project, and formal training.

NASA LaRC training and developmental opportunities as well as related information available on the OHCM Web Site at <http://ohcm.larc.nasa.gov/training/>.

STEP 4: FORMALIZING THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)

The responsibility for developing an IDP is jointly shared by the employee and supervisor. The most effective enrichment activities will result from a meeting between employee and supervisor to identify competency and training requirements. Once identified, the enrichment activities should be recorded and this documentation serves as the basis for developing an IDP.

The IDP is intended to provide a framework for the development of skills that enhance the employee's ability to contribute to the Center's mission. Completing an IDP is voluntary, initiated by the employee, and must be consistent with the objectives of the organizational unit.

To develop an IDP, an employee should:

- review LMS-CP-4312, IDP; (located at: <http://lmsr.larc.nasa.gov/admin/documents/4312.pdf>);
- understand the requirements of the job;
- understand the goals of LaRC and the work unit along with the results of the organizational and functional/occupational needs assessments;
- seek to improve their own performance and that of the work unit;
- understand the objectives and priorities of the new rating period;
- become familiar with the Career Development Plan associated with their occupation;
- conduct a self assessment of the competencies to determine strengths and areas to develop considering the grade level criterion associated with each competency;
- tentatively choose one to three developmental activities for the next year, ranking them in priority order;
- discuss personal development goals and methods with the first-line supervisor;
- draft the IDP;
- initiate training requests;
- attend and complete training;
- identify ways to apply training to the job and do so; and

- discuss what has been learned and its practical application with first-line supervisor.

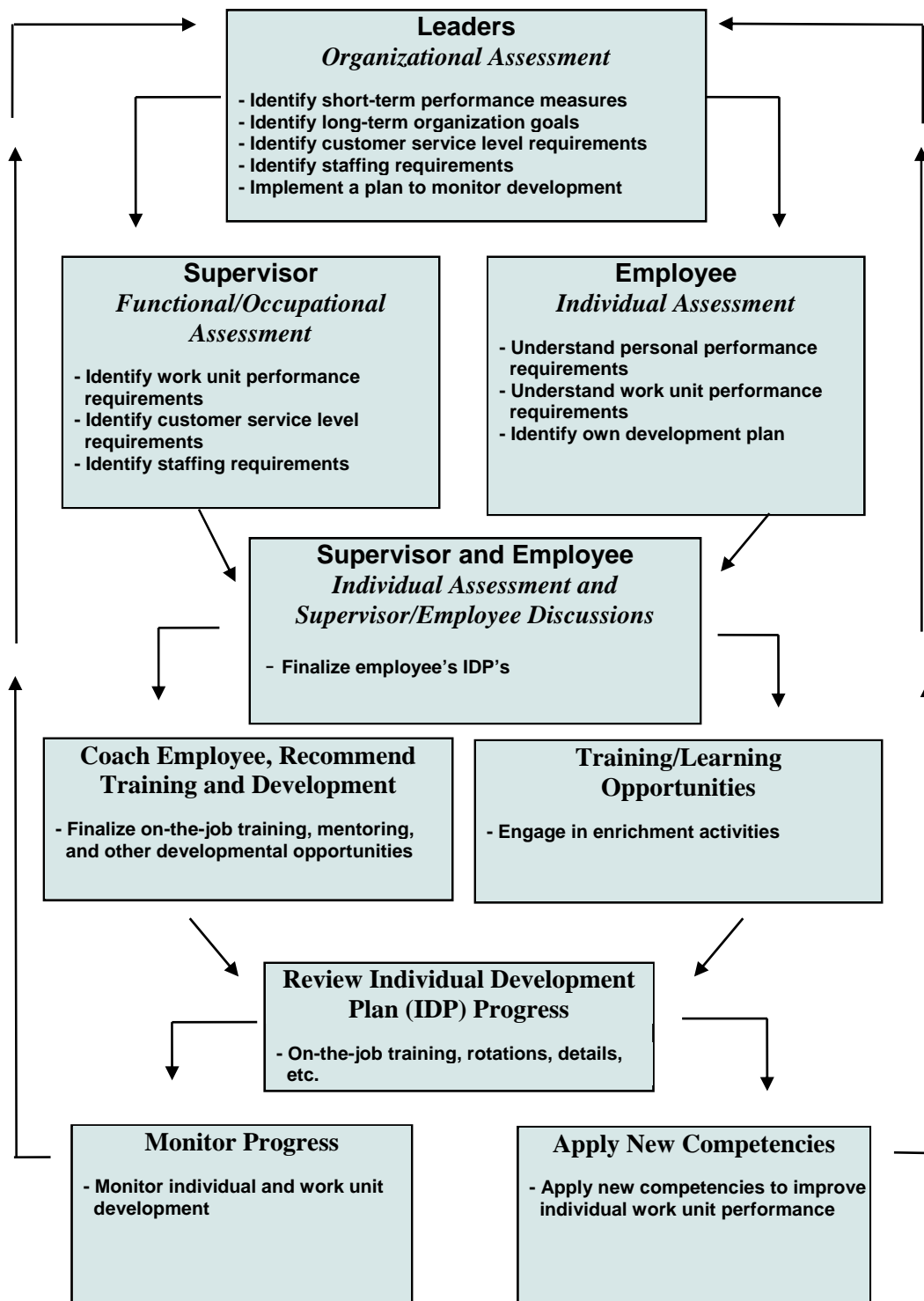
To develop an IDP, the supervisor should:

- review LMS-CP-4312, IDP; (located at: <http://lms-r.larc.nasa.gov/admin/documents/4312.pdf>)
- plan and conduct career counseling - an essential element in any career program (performance discussions should be conducted at least annually between the individual and the supervisor for use as a basis in formulating specific career goals and training plans);
- contribute to and understand the needs assessment at the organizational level (LaRC-wide) and communicate it to employees;
- conduct the needs assessment at the functional/occupational level in their unit;
- develop a list of prioritized developmental needs based on their potential impact on goal attainment;
- assist individuals in analyzing their developmental needs in line with personal job performance and organizational needs, specifically:
 - review the employee's last performance appraisal to determine competencies that can be enhanced by training;
 - review the employee's current position description (PD) to:
 - determine if the PD correctly describes the duties to be performed;
 - list the competencies that support each duty; and
 - determine if training needs are associated with any of the competencies.
 - draft the performance objectives for the new rating period;
 - determine any current or evolving changes, as well as anticipated changes in the tasks, to project training needs based upon different performance objectives;
 - review other considerations, such as workload projections, known operational changes, employee history, uncompleted training from previous years, specific and generic training requirements, mandatory and required training requirements, and LaRC's strategies, goals, and objectives;
 - determine competency-related training and development that the employee must consider to become a fully functioning member of the team;
- determine competency-related training and development that will assist the employee in career growth, meet to discuss the tentative developmental plans with each employee, and identify the training and development needed to achieve short-term goals and document them on the IDP;

- provide feedback and reassess long-term goals as short-term goals are achieved to keep the employee's career development plan realistic and on track;
- discuss with the employee learning from the training and/or development activities and how to apply what was learned in the workplace, and determine if learning was sufficient to meet the employee's and the work unit's needs after a sufficient amount of time;
- provide an environment where employees can discuss their progress and career development.

Creating an Individual Development Plan — A Summary

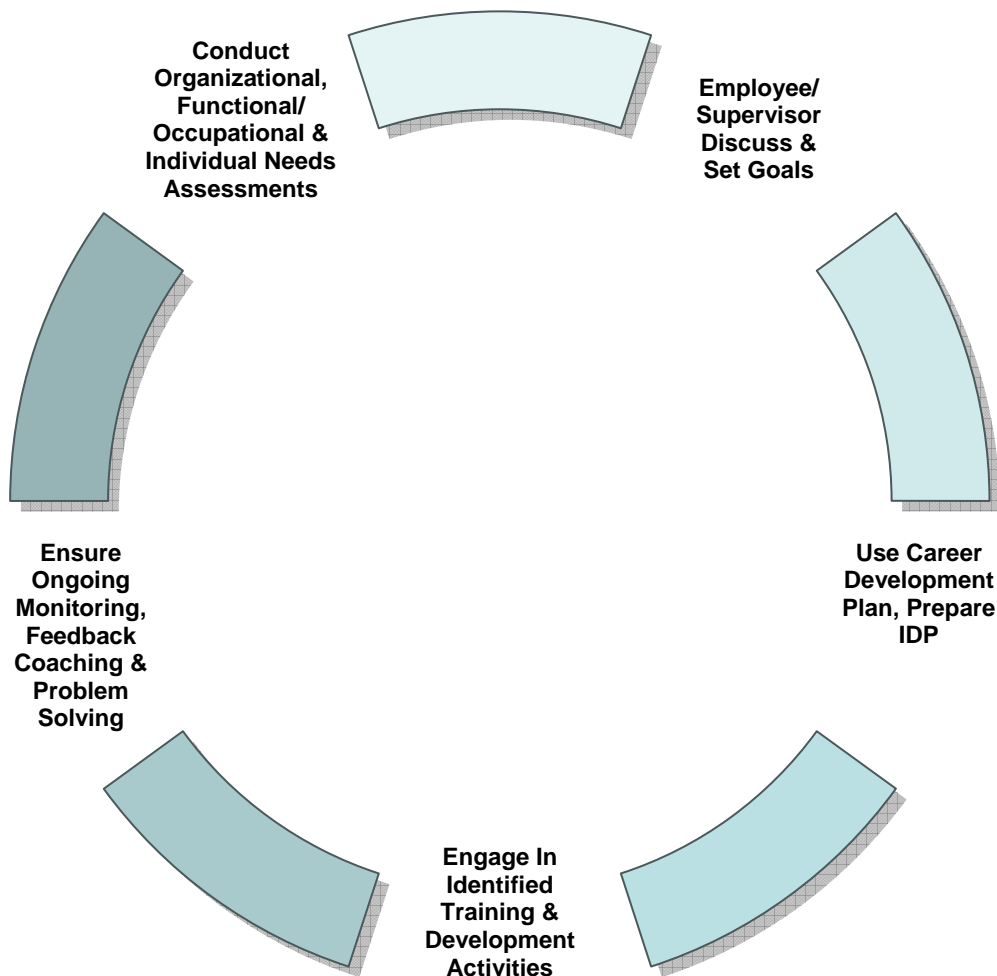
The following chart summarizes the process of formalizing the Individual Development Plan (IDP). This chart illustrates the responsibilities of leaders, supervisors, and employees.



Step 5: Participating in Training and Development Activities and Adjusting the Individual Development Plan

The following diagram shows the career development cycle. The cycle begins with organizational, functional/occupational, and individual assessments, and is an ongoing process of employee-supervisor discussions, use of the appropriate Career Development Plans and IDPs, enrichment activities, and coaching.

Career Program Management Cycle



As competencies are gained, the IDP can be adjusted to focus on other competencies that need to be developed. Similarly, if, at the end of a review cycle, the competency has not been acquired, the IDP should include the same or other developmental activities aimed at helping the employee to acquire the competency.

CONCLUSION

The Career Development Program provides you with tools to help you meet the challenges of the future and to sustain high performance. This program positions LaRC as a knowledge-based and results-oriented organization. You, your supervisor, and HR all have responsibilities in achieving LaRC's goals and mission.

The success of any organization is directly related to the success of its people. Over the years, the accomplishments and contributions of our employees have earned LaRC a position of leadership in human spaceflight. Development of our people to their full potential has been a critical factor in this record of success. To meet the challenges of the future, LaRC is committed to providing the resources and management support necessary to help our employees pursue their career objectives and maximize their career opportunities.

A key theme of this guide is shared responsibility for career development, with employees, supervisors and Center organizations each playing an important role. This sharing of responsibility recognizes that each party has a great deal to gain from an effective career development program: the individual is able to grow both personally and professionally, supervisors are better able to carry out their responsibilities, and the Center is in a better position to carry out its mission. Career development represents a continuing investment in the future of the Center's most important resource – its people – and, as such, deserves the best efforts of the entire LaRC team.

This guide is intended to provide an overview of the LaRC Career Development Program and related programs and resources. This guide does not supersede official policies, procedures, and regulations. If any discrepancies exist between this guide and the official documents, the official documents will govern.

APPENDIX A

NASA Langley Research Center Acronym List

AIAA	American Institute for Aeronautics and Astronautics
ALA	American Library Association
AP	Administrative Professional
APPEL	Academy of Program/Project and Engineering Leadership
ASIST	American Society for Information Science and Technology
AST	Aerospace Technologist
AWARE	Arming Women Against Rape and Endangerment
AWARE	Automated Workforce Actuals Reporting System
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CHROME	Cooperating Hampton Roads Organizations for Minorities in Engineering
CM&O	Center Management and Operations
Co-op Program	Cooperative Education Program
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative
CS	Civil Service
CTAP	Career Transition Assistance Program
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DCFO	Deputy Chief Financial Officer
DEOMI	Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOJ	Department of Justice
EEE	Electrical, Electronic, Electromechanical
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
F&RS	Facilities and Related Services
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulations
FASAB	Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board
FEI	Federal Executive Institute
FEW	Federally Employed Women
FLICC	Federal Library and Information Center Committee
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FTP	Full Time Permanent
FWOCS	Fab Work Order Control System
FWPC	Federal Women's Program Committee
G&A	General and Administrative
GRIN	Great Images in NASA
GSRP	Graduate Student Researchers Program
HR	Human Resources
HUD (NASA)	Heads-up-displays
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IEMP	Integrated Enterprise Management Program
IFMP	Integrated Financial Management Project
IMAPS	International Microelectronics and Packaging Society
IT	Information Technology
LARSS	Langley Aerospace Research Summer Scholars Program
LDP	Leadership Development Program
LIP	Langley Implementation Plan

LLM	Lower-Landing Minimums
LMDP	Langley Management Development Program
LMS	Langley Management System
LoC	Library of Congress
MAST	Management and Supervisory Training
MEP	Management Education Program
MIP	Managing the Influence Process
MIS	Management Information System
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAR	Non-Advocate Review
NBAA	National Business Aviation Association
NCMA	National Contract Management Association
NCTM	National Council of Teachers in Math
NFFP	NASA Faculty Fellowship Program
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NIX	NASA Image Exchange
NSBE	National Society of Black Engineers
NSF	National Science Foundation
NSTA	National Science Teachers Association
OD	Organizational Development
OHCM	Office of Human Capital Management
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OUM	Organizational Unit Manager
PAMA	Professional Aviation Maintenance Association
PEC	Peninsula Engineers Council
PMII	Program Project Management Initiative
PPBE	Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution
PTO	Patent and Trademark Office
RTF	Return to Flight
S&E	Science and Engineering
SAA	Special Achievement Award
SAP	Systems Applications & Products in Data Processing
SATERN	System for Administration, Training, and Educational Resources for NASA
SEB	Source Evaluation Board
SES	Senior Executive Service
SES CDP	Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program
SHARP	Summer High School Apprentice Research Program
SHRM	Society for Human Resource Management
SLA	Special Libraries Association
SLCR	Senior Leadership Council Reports
STARS	Staffing and Recruiting System
TA	Technical Authority
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WBS	Work Breakdown Structure
Web TADS	Web Time and Attendance System
WF	Workforce
WIMS	Workforce Integrated Management System
WPS	Workforce Planning System
